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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MOSCOW 002714

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [RS](#) [MD](#)

SUBJECT: RUSSIAN MFA ON TRANSNISTRIA

Classified By: Pol M/C Susan Elliott for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary. Transnistria Conflict Negotiator Nesterushkin told us that the November 6 talks on Transnistria would be an important first contact between the conflict parties, but expressed concerns about the October 6 "3 plus 2" meeting in Vienna. He said U.S. suggestions at that meeting to eliminate the term "special status" for Transnistria changed agreed language that has been used since 11993. While positive about new Moldovan DPM Osipov, Nesterushkin noted that Osipov's affiliation with the ruling coalition's smallest party meant his views on Transnistria might not prevail in the GOM. Nesterushkin echoed FM Lavrov's comment that the GOM's call to remove Russian peacekeepers from Transnistria "showed insufficient understanding of the situation." End Summary

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Upcoming "5 plus 2" talks  
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12. (C) Russian Transnistria Conflict Negotiator Valeriy Nesterushkin told poloff October 23 that Transnistria's agreement to attend the planned November 6 "5 plus 2" meetings without referencing them as such was simply a game of words. The important point was that all sides had agreed to this first contact between Transnistrian authorities and the new Moldovan government. Nesterushkin shared a letter from Transnistrian "Foreign Minister" Yastrebchak from the same day, confirming participation in the planned meetings, but asking to postpone a Law Enforcement Seminar planned for November 8-9, due to a local holiday.

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Special status  
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13. (C) Nesterushkin expressed concern over suggestions made by the U.S. representative at the October 6 "3 plus 2" meeting in Vienna to eliminate the call for a "special status" for Transnistria from upcoming statements on the conflict region. He argued that the term had been included in the original OSCE report number 13 from 1993, and repeated in statements ever since. Removing the term could jeopardize agreement on Moldova's territorial integrity, while other formulations such as "autonomy" or "republic" to describe Transnistria's future status were too specific, as was the use of "status" alone.

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Kozak Plan  
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14. (C) Acknowledging both Moldovan and Transnistrian opposition to the 2003 Kozak Plan sponsored by Russia,

Nesterushkin no longer pushed for it to be the basis for a future agreement. Given that it captured the "maximum degree of closeness" both sides had agreed to, he echoed FM Lavrov's October 9 statement that the Kozak Plan was based on valid principles that would likely crop up in any settlement agreement.

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Osipov  
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15. (C) Nesterushkin said his October 12 meeting with newly appointed Moldovan Deputy Prime Minister for Reintegration Victor Osipov was useful in getting both sides acquainted. He described Osipov as self-confident, pragmatic, and constructive, and agreed with OSCE Ambassador Philip Remler's assessment of Osipov as flexible on settlement issues.

16. (C) Noting Osipov's affiliation with the smallest coalition party (Nasha Moldova), Nesterushkin cautioned that it remained to be seen if Osipov's views would be translated into GOM policy on Transnistria. Neither the candidate for President, the Prime Minister, nor the speaker of parliament were from Nasha Moldova. Also, Nesterushkin hesitated to assume that Osipov would retain the reintegration ministry's previous staff, which might have signaled continuity in the new government's Transnistria policy.

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Russian troops  
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17. (C) Commenting on Moldovan and Transnistrian calls to respectively remove or increase the Russian troop presence in Transnistria, Nesterushkin said it was up to the conflict parties to decide what to do with the Russian troops. He claimed that the troop presence was stabilizing, and that withdrawing them would create a military void in the ceasefire zone, Nesterushkin called Moldovan talk of removing the troops "stupid adventurism." He did not address Moldovan PM Filat's proposal to replace the Russian presence by international peacekeepers.

18. (SBU) Nesterushkin's views reflected FM Lavrov's comment October 9 that changing the peacekeeping format before agreeing on a conflict settlement "turned everything upside down," and "showed insufficient understanding of the situation." MFA spokesman Andrei Nesterenko similarly stated October 13 that any change in the Russian peacekeeping contingent, as well as the resumption of ammunition removal from the Russian depot in Colbasna, depended on "specific steps" to settle the Transnistria conflict. It was up to Chisinau and Tiraspol to select such steps.

19. (C) The October 21 joint Moldova-Transnistria-Russia troop exercises, "sabotaged by Moldova" since 2003, were a good thing, Nesterushkin explained. The artificial freeze hampered normal troop readiness levels and kept the joint peacekeeping force from fulfilling its mandate.

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Comment  
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110. (C) In light of the changes in administration in the U.S. and Moldova, Nesterushkin is looking to preserve previously agreed positions into resumed settlement talks -- language on a "special status" for Transnistria and an ongoing presence of Russian troops in Transnistria. He continues to shy away from acknowledging a role for Russia in influencing Tiraspol, instead emphasizing the need for both conflict parties to find agreement on settlement issues. Beyrle